**Accountant (certified): job description**

Certified accountants are employed by both public and private sector organisations, for whom they undertake a wide range of managerial and accountancy services.

ACCA operates a special entrance scheme for mature candidates.

**What does a certified accountant do?** [Typical employers](http://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/job-descriptions/275785-accountant-certified-job-description#employers) |[Qualifications and training](http://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/job-descriptions/275785-accountant-certified-job-description#training) | [Key skills](http://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/job-descriptions/275785-accountant-certified-job-description#skills)

Certified accountants work to improve the efficiency and maximise the profitability of an organisation. Their skills are in demand in a wide range of sectors; many graduate accountants work in public practice firms, but accountants may also be employed by the private, commercial, and not-for-profit sectors. The work of certified accountants entails:

* analysing and investigating annual and monthly financial accounts;
* undertaking financial administration;
* preparing reports, budgets, business plans, commentaries and financial statements;
* financial forecasting and risk analysis;
* liaising with managerial staff, colleagues and clients;
* negotiating business terms with clients and associated organisations;
* developing and managing financial systems/policies;
* administering payrolls;
* controlling income and expenditure;
* ensuring compliance with taxation legislation.

The role tends to be office-based, although audit work often requires graduate certified accountants to visit client premises. Such visits may necessitate stays away from home that range in duration from one night to several weeks. While working hours tend to last from nine to five, longer hours may be common around peak times and in some sectors within commerce and the financial sector. Despite this, flexible working hours, job sharing and opportunities to work from home are often available, and the profession generally provides a good level of job security, remuneration and intellectual stimulation. Due to the high international regard for the profession and for accountancy qualifications, secondments and transfers abroad are possible, and are increasingly common within larger multinational corporations.

**Typical employers of certified accountants**

* Utilities
* The NHS
* Local authorities
* Charities
* Industrial organisations
* Manufacturing/engineering firms.

Most vacancies arise in major towns and cities. Competition is most severe for training places with large organisations. For these, early applications, relevant research and previous business/accountancy experience can help to secure a place. Lists of training vacancies are available from qualification providers, such as the Association of Chartered and Certified Accountants (ACCA). Opportunities are also advertised by careers services, in national newspapers and in relevant publications such as *Accountancy Age,* ACCA's newsletter, TARGETjobs *City and Finance*, and the *Accounting and Business* journal. ACCA also publishes a list of organisations that run approved training schemes.

**Qualifications and training required**

Certified accountants are required to undertake professional accountancy qualifications,which are provided by a number of professional bodies, including ACCA. These qualifications normally include studying for accountancy exams, an assessment of professional ethical judgement, and a supervised period of relevant work experience with an approved employer.

While it is possible to study independently, many graduates prefer to secure training contracts with firms who sponsor their professional studies and allow them to complete the work experience requirement of the accountancy qualification. Graduates must normally complete three years of relevant work experience, but in some cases previous experience from internships may be counted toward this. Qualification allows graduate accountants to practice in a wide range of areas, and to identify themselves as a member of a professional accountancy body. Although the training period can be demanding, once qualified, membership reflects the professional standard of an individual's training, and that the quality of their work and expertise can be trusted. It also opens the door to speedy career progression, and many graduate accountants' salaries double shortly after qualification.

Qualification normally takes three years. The minimum academic requirements for entry are two GCSEs (grades A-C, including English and Maths) and two A-Levels (or the equivalent). Graduates of all disciplines may train as certified accountants, but those who have previously studied accounting, finance, or business-related subjects may gain exemptions from some exams. Larger employers expect a good record of academic achievement, and will often ask for 260 - 300 UCAS points and a first or 2.1 degree.

Certain organisations may also prefer graduates to gain chartered status; this is particularly relevant to graduates who want to work internationally. Many larger employers also offer internships and work experience programmes, which can be useful in gaining insight and as evidence of interest in accountancy when graduates apply for training schemes. The Certificate in Finance, Accounting and Business (CFAB) can be taken during university holidays, and is another useful way of gaining knowledge and demonstrating interest.

**Key skills for certified accountants**

While technical abilities are obviously vital, accountants are expected to take a more strategic role in the future. Employers look for graduates that are reliable and trustworthy, and who will provide responsible advice on financial efficiency. Other in-demand skills include:

* Creativity
* Integrity
* Interpersonal, negotiation and communication skills
* Self-motivation
* The ability to work as part of a team
* Good IT skills
* Analytical ability
* Numerical skills
* Excellent commercial sense and interest in business.